



## **HOW TO USE POTASSIUM PERMANGANATE SOLUTION SOAKS**

### **What are the aims of this leaflet?**

This leaflet has been written to help you understand how to use potassium permanganate soaks, prepared using potassium permanganate tablets for cutaneous solution, for example Permitabs® or EN-Potab®.

### **What is potassium permanganate?**

Potassium permanganate is a chemical which, when diluted, works as a mild antiseptic and astringent (something that dries the skin). It is for external use only. This means that it should only be used on the outside of your body and must never be put in the mouth or swallowed.

### **Important safety advice:**

- 1. Potentially fatal if swallowed.**
- 2. The tablets must be stored away from children and vulnerable adults.**
- 3. Potassium permanganate must be diluted in water before use.**
- 4. Always wear disposable, protective gloves when handling potassium permanganate to avoid staining or irritation of the skin.**

### **What skin conditions are treated with potassium permanganate?**

Skin conditions commonly treated with potassium permanganate soaks include weeping or blistering conditions such as acute weeping/infected eczema and leg ulcers.

### **How to use potassium permanganate safely?**

The solution should be freshly prepared just before use, as, if left it will start to oxidise and go brown. Wearing disposable, protective gloves, use a clean

container, lined with a clean white-bin liner bag. This will allow you to see the colour of the water when potassium permanganate is diluted with water. Fill the lined container with 4 litres of warm tap water and add one tablet of Permitabs® or EN-Potab® - allow the tablet to dissolve completely in the water. The colour of the water should be light pink.

Apply petroleum jelly (for example Vaseline®) to the finger or toenails to prevent staining if they are going to be exposed to potassium permanganate solution. If treating the extremities (hands and feet), they may be soaked in diluted potassium permanganate solution. If treating a larger part of the body and limbs, the solution may be poured into a bath. If treating a localised area such as under the breasts or in the groin, gauze swabs may be soaked in the diluted solution and applied to those areas. Treat the affected areas for 10-15 minutes and then pat dry with a clean towel. The solution may be disposed of in the household drain if the treatment is being given at home. Potassium permanganate solution may stain containers and baths, showers, and wash basins, and irritate the skin, so they should be cleaned thoroughly after use.

### **How should the treated area be cared for?**

Once the affected area has been soaked and dried, apply any prescribed cream/ointment and or dressings, and repeat as recommended by your healthcare professional.

### **What are the possible side effects of potassium permanganate soaks?**

- Dryness of the skin.
- Can cause irritation or burns if the dilution is not adequate.
- Contact with eyes and mucous membranes (inside of mouth, nose, ear, genitals, and anus) may cause irritation and should be avoided.
- **Harmful if swallowed** – may cause significant side effects. If swallowed, seek medical help immediately.
- Potassium permanganate is a dye and will stain clothing, fabrics, and ceramic basins.

### **How will I be monitored for the side effects of potassium permanganate soaks?**

The nurse giving the treatment will assess your skin before and after treatment. If you are treating yourself and you have concerns, contact the healthcare professional who prescribed the treatment.

### **What to do if you accidentally swallow potassium permanganate or get it into your eyes**

Potassium permanganate can be extremely harmful if swallowed. If you accidentally swallow the tablet or solution, drink a small glass of milk or water, and seek immediate medical help at your nearest accident and emergency department or ring 999.

If you accidentally get potassium permanganate in your eyes, try not to rub or keep them closed. Wash your eyes straight away with plenty of water for at least 15 minutes, remove any contact lenses and contact NHS 111 immediately.

### **Where can I get more information about potassium permanganate?**

*Alliance Pharmaceuticals Limited*

Avonbridge House

Bath Road

Chippenham

Wiltshire SN15 2BB

Contact: <https://www.alliancepharmaceuticals.com/contact/>

DermNet NZ: <http://www.dermnetnz.org/treatments/permanganate.html>

For details of source materials used please contact the Clinical Standards Unit ([clinicalstandards@bad.org.uk](mailto:clinicalstandards@bad.org.uk)).

**This leaflet aims to provide accurate information about the subject and is a consensus of the views held by representatives of the British Association of Dermatologists: individual patient circumstances may differ, which might alter both the advice and course of therapy given to you by your doctor.**

*This leaflet has been assessed for readability by the British Association of Dermatologists' Patient Information Lay Review Panel*

**BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF DERMATOLOGISTS**

**PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET**

**PRODUCED OCTOBER 2015**

**UPDATED APRIL 2022**

**REVIEW DATE APRIL 2025**